MUNICIPALITIES

MANAMA MUNICIPALITY

(From the report of Mr. Mohamed Saleh Shater, Secretary of the Manama Municipality)

At the beginning of the year, owing to sectarian differences between Sunni and Shia members in 1371 which caused the resignation of the Shia members, Municipal affairs were being dealt with by a committee of Sunnis. This was the situation until the middle of the year when the Government succeeded in persuading the Shia members to resume their duties on the Council. They returned on the understanding that they would serve for only one year after which an election should be held.

During the latter part of the year the Council functioned in a more or less normal manner; by shelving all matters which might cause controversy between the sects the Council succeeded in performing its duties without serious differences. The situation, however, was not satisfactory.

Finance. The Financial Committee which drew up the budget was formed from the temporary Sunni committee. Estimated revenue for 1372 was Rs. 7,04,000 and expenditure was assessed at the same figure. The actual revenue exceeded the estimate by Rs. 1,16,000, the expenditure was Rs. 61,000 more than was expected and at the end of the year a surplus of revenue over expenditure amounting to Rs. 61,000 was added to the Reserve which was then Rs. 2,83,000.

The increase in revenue was due to a great extent to higher receipts from house and shop taxes. There were many new buildings in the town and higher rents were charged for existing buildings, both for houses and shops. House taxes and shop taxes on buildings which are leased are charged on a percentage basis of the rent. Taxation on houses which are occupied by their owners is extremely low in comparison with that of rented premises. A large proportion of the rented houses are occupied by foreigners and most of the houses in which the owners live are occupied by people of the country.

During the year the Municipality sold land to the public at the price of Rs. 35,200 and it purchased a new fire engine for Rs. 48,000. The Government presented to the Municipality a motor-driven trailer fire pump and jeep, a rubbish carrying vehicle and a gully emptying vehicle.

Municipal activities. Town cleaning was effected during the year by two trucks and 30 donkey carts, town rubbish was utilised to reclaim a large portion of sea on the shore at Hora, opposite Cable and Wireless premises. The method of employing donkey carts to carry town refuse is not a satisfactory one. An order was placed in England during the summer for small rubbish-carrying vehicles which can be used in narrow streets.

A number of roads in the town were metalled, the area dealt with was about 380,000 square feet on which was used 480,000 cubic feet of stone and 105,000 cubic feet of sand, the whole costing approximately Rs. 1,76,000.

Some progress was made in widening streets in the bazaar area, 112 new street lights were installed and more trees were planted on the roads, unfortunately each year a number of trees are destroyed, by wind or sometimes by rain which when it falls strongly seems to kill both plants and trees.

There was much building activity both in the town and on the outskirts of the town, numbers of small houses were built for occupation by their owners and more European style bungalows and flats were built for letting. House rents are excessively high, landlords expect to recover the cost of their property in less than ten years, so building houses for letting is at present a profitable investment. However, so many houses are now being built that it seems possible that in a short time there may be more houses than tenants.

During the year permits for new buildings were issued by the Municipality for 144 stone houses and 100 barasti huts and permits for repairs and additions to 186 shops and 717 houses were also granted.

1 [A.D 1951-52 - Analyst]

[Minor's Estates Department]

657 736 Disbursements for maintenance amounted to Rs. 108,800, almost exactly the same sum as was paid out in the previous year. At the beginning of the year the number of orphans and widows who were drawing allowances was 442, of these 36 attained majority and took over their property, cash payments to them totalled Rs. 182,500.

657 652 The Department built four houses in Manama and Muharraq and carried out repairs to a number of other buildings, the expenditure under this heading was Rs. 78,000.

As usual the funds held by the Department together with funds placed at its disposal by the Government were given out on loan to the public, at interest, secured by title deeds of immovable property or gold. The rates of interest charged by the Department are low in comparison to those prevailing in the market.

During the year the Government placed with the Department a further 2¼ lakhs, making its total deposit Rs. 10,80,000.

Interest on loans collected during the year was Rs. 1,46,000, there is a scale of interest depending upon the amount of the loan, the average rate of interest during the year was 6 per cent.

Loans repaid to the Department during the year amounted to Rs. 19,29,000, about 3 lakhs more than in 1371, new loans, made to the public, were approximately 24¼ lakhs. At the end of the year 24¼ lakhs were on loan to the public.

DEPARTMENTAL ACCOUNT

Receipts			Expenditure		
Balance from 1371 ..	Rs. 16, 585 6 10		Maintenance allowances, etc.	Rs. 1,08,876 9 0	
From estates and compensation cases	1,31,249		Purchase of properties	9,330 0 0	
Rents	.. 1,96,394 13 4		Upkeep of buildings and additions ..	78,325 15 11	
Refund of Loans ..	19,29,600 0 0		Payments to the beneficiaries	.. 1,82,511 10 0	
Interest on Loans ..	.. 1,46,040 0 0		Loans advanced ..	..24,40,250 0 0	
Deposits	.. 2,09,051 12 5		Balance in the Eastern Bank	.. 1,25,205 9 1	
Loan from Government	.. 2,50,000 0 0				
By sale of properties ..	.. 50,451 4 3				
Debts recovered ..	.. 15,127 5 6				
Total	Rs. 29,44,499 12 0		Total	Rs. 29,44,499 12 0	

LAND REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT

(From the report of Mr. Abdul-Aziz Al Saleh, acting Superintendent of the Department)

423 651 625 **Land Registration.** There were 1,072 transactions during the year which included 628 sales, 262 registration of titles and 182 gifts; the properties which were dealt with consisted of 273 plots of ground, most of them being building sites, 82 gardens, 47 shops and 26 miscellaneous lots. Fees amounting to Rs. 1,27,975 were collected of which Rs. 1,20,781 was derived from sales and Rs. 7,194 from registration of titles, etc.

Sales and Land Values. The aggregate value of the property which was sold was approximately 40 lakhs, £300,000. In the previous year prices reached a somewhat higher figure but they included several sales of large areas of land on the edge of Manama. There has been no fall in land prices and there are no indications of a change in the situation. High prices are still being paid for building sites in Manama on which European style houses, flats and bungalows, are being built, which are let at excessively high rents. When the demand for houses of this type begins to lessen then rents will decrease and there are some signs that this event is not far off, several recently built houses have "To Let" notices on their doors. At present as much as Rs. 1,000/- per month is being charged for a three-bedroom, dining-sitting-room bungalow on the Jufair Road.

A recent satisfactory development has been the demand by working class men to buy small building plots in Manama, Muharraq, Hidd and Rafaa. The building loan schemes of the Government and the Bahrain Petroleum Company have stimulated this development. At one time people were satisfied to live in hired houses or barastis for which they paid rent but now, partly owing to the rapaciousness of landlords and partly because it has become everyone's ambition to own the house in which he lives, there is an active demand for plots of ground on which small houses can be built. Unfortunately the Government owns very little land in and around Manama and nobody wishes to live even at a short distance from the bazaar, the schools and the cinemas.

The most important sales were an Arab style house in the southern district of Manama, on Shaikh Isa Road, which was sold for Rs. 200,000 and a plot of land in the Qudhabia district which was bought by the Government as a site for workmen's dwellings for Rs. 2,57,000, at Rs. 2/5 per square foot. The Government sold 87 plots of land, in various places, for Rs. 3.50,000. Land on the edge of the towns of Manama and Muharraq was sold at prices ranging from Rs. 1/4 to Rs. 3/- per square foot. Thirty building plots were sold at East Rafaa, on the plain below the town, to residents of Rafaa, at 2 Annas per square foot. Land on this site was marked out as a residential area with rows of plots of uniform depth along future roads. At the end of the year a few purchasers had begun to build stone houses on the ground which they bought.

Legislation. In Safar (October 1952) an important Ordinance was issued which prohibited all persons subject to Bahrain jurisdiction from disposing of any property except to Bahrain subjects. An extension of this order was issued later providing for the contingency of heirs in an estate of a Bahrain subject being themselves foreign subjects. The result of these Ordinances was that not only were Bahrain subjects restricted from selling their property to foreigners but all persons subject to Bahrain jurisdiction, Persians, subjects of Saudi Arabia and of other Gulf States, were restricted from selling their property to each other or to nationals of other countries. Only foreigners not under the jurisdiction of the Bahrain Courts were free to sell their property to other foreigners. The object of the Government is to prevent land in Bahrain from being alienated and it is hoped that in future this legislation will be further extended to preclude all foreigners in Bahrain from disposing of their property to any persons who are not Bahrain subjects.

The imposition of this ordinance caused some resentment among foreigners especially among Saudi Arabians and Persians who in the past have acquired extensive property in Bahrain. This ordinance was probably the cause of some reduction in the number of large land sales during 1372.

One of the reasons why the Government now has so little land at its disposal in Manama and on the outskirts of the town is because in the past large pieces of land were either sold or given to Persians and Saudi Arabians. In the former category is one of the principal landowners in the town. The only area of any size, suitable for development as a housing area, is the land on the south-west of Manama which is now occupied by the installations of Cable and Wireless Ltd. Arrangements are being made for the Company to move out into the country to a site on the Aali plain, but this move will take some time to be carried out.

Rents of Government Shops. The Department collected rents amounting to Rs. 51,000/- from the shops in Barrett Road and from the flat above the Post Office and Rs. 20,000/- from rents of 26 plots of land which were let on leases. Temporary leases of land produced Rs. 3,800.